



ADDRESSING UN SDG 3 - GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING: Occupational therapy students mitigating the negative impact of confinement and social distancing through the Build-a-Box Programme.



This module:

- addresses the experience of loneliness and isolation of older people and other vulnerable groups in society during the pandemic.
- supports students to understand their agency for change and the role they play, in a personal and professional capacity, in contributing to the good health and well-being of citizens.

QUICK FACTS

Lecturer: Dr Hazel Killeen and Dr Sinéad Hynes

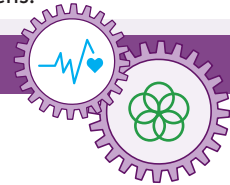
Dept./School: Bachelor of Science (Hons) Occupational Therapy, College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences

Module Title: Community Engagement, NUI Galway

Community Partners: COPE Galway, Galway City Partnership, The Bridge Project, and The Mercy Primary School Galway

Purpose of Partnership: The partnership aimed to reduce some of the negative impacts of confinement and social distancing on “high risk” groups. The students worked with community organisations to produce custom-made boxes, containing items and activities, that address their service user needs during the pandemic.

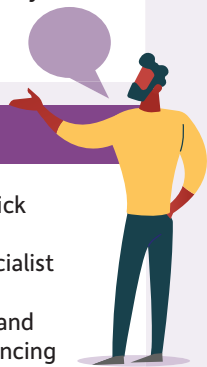
Weblink: <http://www.nuigalway.ie/cki/servicelearning/casestudies/build-a-boxcampaign/>



CONTEXT

The Build-a-Box programme, developed in the ‘Community Engagement’ module, aimed to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups. Genuine partnerships that are of mutual benefit to the students and community partners are critical for this programme’s success. Students are exposed to real-time

community issues. They learn to respond to the needs of their partners with empathy and respect, and contribute to creative and sustainable solutions to everyday problems, ultimately building the foundation for life-long partnership skills.

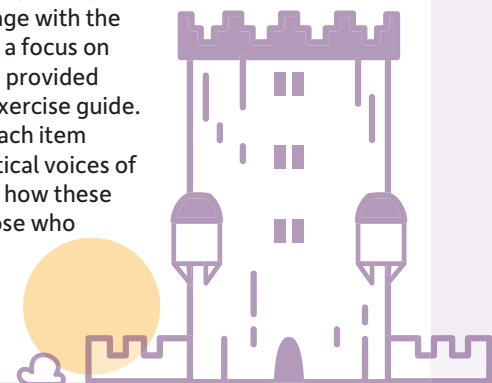


DETAILS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING PROJECT

In 2020/21, the Build-a-Box project was launched by 3rd year occupational therapy students and their lecturers Dr Hazel Killeen and Dr Sinéad Hynes. Alongside their community partners, COPE Galway, Galway City Partnership, the Bridge Project, and The Mercy Primary School, the aim of the initiative was to reach out to isolated sub-groups in society: older adults living alone, women in Direct Provision, children with additional needs in disadvantaged communities, and women who are homeless. Funding was provided by the Community Knowledge Initiative NUI Galway, and multiple contributions from local businesses. In simple terms, the Build-a-Box programme, launched during the COVID-19 pandemic, involves filling boxes with purposefully selected items and delivering these to high-risk people. Each of the vulnerable groups receives a box filled with items and activities that specifically match their needs. Students gain an appreciation for how socio-political factors impact vulnerable people in our communities, hone their professional skillsets, and witness the valuable role played by key community entities.

The crucial step in the Build-a-Box programme is for students to focus on the box content for each sub-group, managing a budget of €30 per box. For the four categories of boxes, students were challenged to consider 20 items, all aimed at

minimising the negative effects of confinement, and pick their final 10. Each item was carefully selected for its evidence base as an intervention, informed by the specialist knowledge of community partners, and feedback from service users who tested the items for their feasibility and overall value. Students had to think reflexively by balancing their course knowledge and life experience with the information they were acquiring through this live project. Students followed up with each sub-group to learn how the items were received. Older adults who use COPE Galway services received boxes containing items such as a bird feeder, a bird identifier book, seeds, compost, and a pot to engage with the outdoors. The box also had a focus on exercise as recipients were provided with a pedometer and an exercise guide. The careful evaluation of each item which incorporated the critical voices of all stakeholders was key to how these items were received by those who needed them the most.

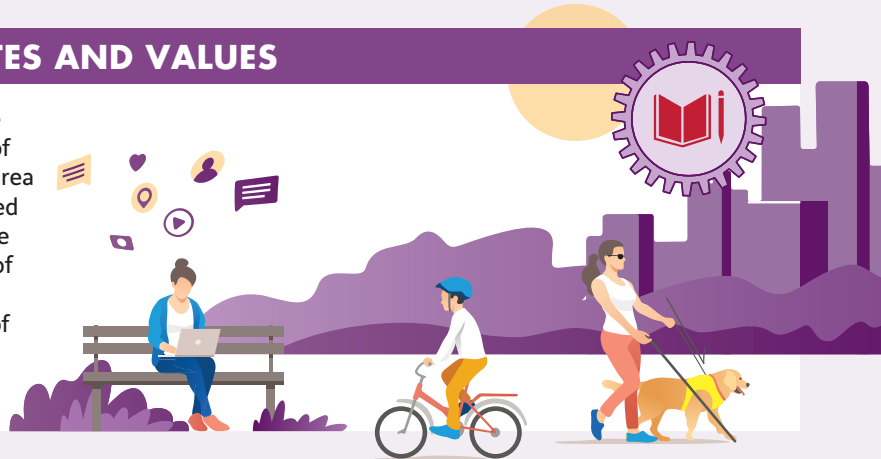




COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING – Addressing Societal Challenges through the Curriculum

DEVELOPING GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES AND VALUES

The aim of the module is to provide 3rd year undergraduate occupational therapy students with first-hand knowledge of community organisations working in areas related to their area of study. It also facilitates them to learn how they as engaged citizens and future professionals can positively influence the lives of people in their community through the application of their knowledge, skills, graduate attributes and values. The module encourages students to see themselves as agents of change; that they can play a strong role in adapting existing services and shaping new ones.



GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES AND VALUES ACQUIRED THROUGH THIS PROJECT

Effective, global citizens who recognise and challenge inequality

Independent and creative thinkers

Compassion:
Empathetic, demonstrates care for self and others

Integrity:
Trustworthy, ethical and dependable



ABOUT

Campus Engage is working to bring higher education teaching staff, students, and communities together to address societal challenges through the curriculum. The Campus Engage Steering Committee and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning are grateful to Dr Ruth Hally, Civic Engagement Programme Coordinator, UCC who led this project. This case study was written by Dr Hally, with

Dr Hazel Killeen, Dr Sinéad Hynes and Dr Lorraine McIlrath NUI Galway; and was informed by the UCC Graduate Attributes Programme framework, funded by the Higher Education Authority and the Tomar Trust.

For more information go to:
www.campusengage.ie